N° 38. *Monday, April* 17, 1727.

How hard is the Condition of our Sex?
In all the dear, delightful Days of Youth,
A rigid Father *dictates to our Wills,*
And deals out Pleaſure with a ſcanty Hand.
To his the Tyrant Husband's *Reign ſucceeds.*
Proud with Opinion of ſuperior Reaſon,
He holds domeſtick Buſineſs and Devotion
All we are capable of knowing, and ſhuts us,
Like cloyſter'd Idiots, from the World's Acquaintance.
ROWE.

MY Deſign, in this Paper, being to do Juſtice to Perſons of all Conditions and of either Sex; I cannot any longer poſtpone the following Letter from a *loyal Female Correſpondent*, in Defence of the moſt amiable Part of the Creation; eſpecially, ſince the Arguments, alledged in their Behalf, are very plauſible, if not convincing; and my fair Readers may depend on it, that I ſtill retain too ſtrong a Senſe of the Pleaſure, which I have formerly taken in their Converſation, to refuſe them any Favour in my Power; at leaſt ſo reaſonable a Requeſt as is now made to me; for according to the Poet,

Old *as I am, for Ladies Sport unfit,*
The Power of Beauty I remember yet,
Which once inflam'd my Love, and ſtill inſpires my Wit.

To

To CALEB D'ANVERS, *Esq;*

Venerable Sir,

I Have, for a long Time, been a ſilent Obſerver of the inſolent Superiority, which your Sex has aſſumed over ours; and of the many pretended Advantages, which they boaſt of on their Side. They look upon us, for the moſt Part, as trifling Amuſements and pretty Playthings to toy away an Hour with; to divert the Spleen; or ſoften the Fatigues of ordinary Buſineſs. They allow us at beſt to be good domeſtick Drudges only, fit to manage the Affairs of a Family; and excuſe Themſelves to their ſneering Companions, for mating with ſuch poor ſimple Creatures, by ſaying with a ſupercilious Air, that we are *neceſſary Evils*. In ſhort they treat us, as if we were of another Species, as well as of another Sex; and as if there was as much Difference between them and us, as between the rational and irrational Part of the Creation.

Nay, ſome of the old ſelf-ſufficient Philoſophers of your Sex (for I will not allow that there are no *Female* Philoſophers) have carried the Point ſo far as to maintain that *Women have no Souls*.--Poor Wretches! I laugh at their Folly, as much as I deſpiſe their Arrogance; and as wiſe as they might think themſelves, I could eaſily expoſe the Abſurdity of excluding us from all the Concerns of the *Commonwealth*.

Indeed too many, even among us, through Cuſtom, Education and early Impreſſions given them in their Childhood, look upon themſelves in the ſame Light. They have been bred up in this Opinion; and being contented, either through Indolence or want of Thought, with the humble Station, which is allotted them, jog on in their low Sphere, without any Ambition, and really imagine themſelves an inferior Sort of Beings to Mankind; poſſeſſed with meaner

meaner Capacities and more confin'd Underſtandings.——But I, Sir, having ſtrictly examined this Affair, am reſolved to let you and all the World know (if you dare to publiſh this Letter) that we not only *have Souls*, but Souls as large and comprehenſive, as capable of Improvement and of performing great Actions, as any of you all.

Were it only the pretty *Tupée* Sparks and fine Dreſſers of the Age, who careſs'd themſelves with this Notion, I ſhould not think it worth my while to animadvert upon them; for even the weakeſt of our weak Sex (as they delight to call us) is more than a Match for the wiſeſt of them. We lead them by the Noſe, and make what *Dupes* and *Bubbles* of them we pleaſe, at the ſame Time that they deſpiſe us. But what provokes me thus, is to find that ſeveral of the beſt Writers of your Sex have the ſame deſpicable Opinion of us; one of whom ſays, that *the utmoſt of a Woman's Character is contained in a domeſtick Life.* I deny This with both my Hands, and will prove it to be falſe; but cannot, by the Way, help obſerving that, provided it were true, it does not become Gentlemen of ſo much Honour and good Nature (as They love to be thought) to be always inſulting their Inferiors with Boaſts of their Preheminence; and continually ſhewing their Wit upon us ſilly Women, who are in all Reſpects ſo much beneath them. Methinks this conſtant Endeavour to detract from us, looks like a tacit Confeſſion that They do not in their Hearts believe there is ſo wide a Difference between us, as they pretend.

You ſay, that in Philoſophy, Mathematicks and all Points of abſtruſe Learning, the Advantage is manifeſtly on your Side. I grant it; but it does not follow that you have better Capacities than we to attain theſe Arts, provided ours were equally cultivated and improved. We are not brought up to *Literature*; and yet ſome of us, by our own Application, have made

made a conſiderable Figure in it; whereas how many of thoſe vaſt Numbers of your Sex, who are kept ſeven or eight Years at School, and as many at the Univerſity, and have no Pains nor Expence ſpared for the Embelliſhment of your Minds; how many of you, I ſay, are there, who, after all This, know nothing farther than the bare Names of ſome particular Sciences and the Titles of a few common Books?

To upbraid us therefore with your Superiority in *Learning* is juſt as reaſonable, as if one of us ſhould pretend to be a greater Genius than Sir *Iſaac Newton*, becauſe ſhe underſtands *Lace* and *Silks* better.

In *domeſtick Affairs*, I think you grant us the Precedence. You allow that we are very good *Paſtry-Cooks*; that we are perfectly acquainted with the Mechaniſm of a *Pudding*, or the Structure of a *Pye*; that we can make *Jellies* or *whipt Cream*, and manage a *ſet Dinner* with great Order and Dexterity. Why even This, as trifling as it may ſeem, is more than half the Men in *England* can do. But is This all the Buſineſs of a good *female Oeconomiſt*? No; how many Women could I mention, who have, by their wiſe Conduct and domeſtick Policy, retriev'd the diſtreſs'd Affairs of their Spendthrift Huſbands; ſnatch'd them from the very Gates of a Priſon; and reſcued them from the laſt Extremities of Hunger and Infamy? Does not This ſhew ſome Wiſdom? Does it not bear ſome Reſemblance to redeeming the Miſcarriages of a weak Government, and ſettling the Diſorders of a convuls'd State?

Yet ſuch is the Ingratitude of Mankind; and ſo jealous are you leſt we ſhould come in Competition with you for Conduct and good Senſe; that whenever any Woman, for the Sake of her Husband and Family, takes upon herſelf the Adminiſtration of Affairs, ſhe is immediately branded by her Neighbours with the Character of a *She-Tyrant*; and the good Man

Man is call'd *Hen-peck'd*; as if a Woman could not be prudent and diſcreet, without being a Termagant and a Vixon. From hence comes that witty Saying, *the grey Mare is the better Horſe*; and that opprobrious Imputation of *wearing the Breeches*; which can imply no more than that a *wiſe Woman* is obliged to ſupply the Place of a *fooliſh Husband*.

I have hitherto ſpoken of Women only in a *private Character*. The principal Objection is to be anſwered ſtill; which is, that they are unequal to *publick Buſineſs*, and incapable of managing the great Concerns of *Government* and *War*.

Now, if I had a Mind to be ſmart upon the fine Gentlemen of the Town, and rally them upon their Negotiations with our Sex; I believe I could puzzle them a little with ſome Queſtions, that I could put to them, concerning the Subtlety, Penetration, Fortitude and Reſolution of ſome Dames, whom they have met with. I could ask them whether they think it impoſſible for a Woman to be *tam Marte quam Mercurio*, (there's *Latin* for you) and whether they never heard of ſome buxome Laſſes, who have been lately diſcovered in our Armies, after having ſerved with the utmoſt Gallantry in ſeveral Campaigns; but leſt I ſhould incur the Cenſure, which is generally paſſed upon us Women, of being impertinent upon all Occaſions, and turning ſerious Things into Ridicule, I ſhall carefully avoid every Thing of that Nature, and maintain a due Diſtinction between the Terms of a *Tea-Table* and the Reaſonings of a *ſolid Lucubration*.

I will not inſiſt upon the Exploits of *Camilla*, *Thaleſtris*, and divers *Amazonian* Ladies, whom we read of; becauſe, perhaps, you will reject them as fabulous. Neither will I mention any other *Heroines* of remote Antiquity, however well atteſted, either of our own or foreign Countries; becauſe it will be inconſiſtent with the Conciſeneſs of a Letter, and I have

Inſtances

Inſtances nearer at Hand, ſufficient for my preſent Purpoſe.

To begin no higher than Q. *Elizabeth* of ever glorious Memory; when was the *Britiſh* Name, both in Peace and War, both at home and abroad, carried to a greater height than in the Reign of that immortal Princeſs? Did ſhe not in Perſon advance againſt the *invincible Armada*, with which ſhe was threatened from *Spain*; and were not all Affairs of State conducted with as much ſound Policy in her Reign as in any we read of either before or ſince; not excepting even our late *glorious Treaties* and *wonderful Negotiations?*--Do not ſay that it was owing to her choice of *wiſe Miniſters*; for That may be equally objected againſt any Prince whatſoever. Beſides, it is a certain Sign of *Wiſdom* to make ſuch a *wiſe Choice*; and I will defy you to inſtance any *weak Prince*, who for ſo many Years together always had the Happineſs to blunder upon ſuch *able Politicians*.

Perhaps it may be expected that I ſhould not, in this Place, omit to mention the late Queen ANNE; in whoſe auſpicious Reign the *Britiſh* Arms and Name were carried to ſo great an height; eſpecially during the firſt nine glorious Years of her Government; and I cannot help obſerving, even concerning the *latter pacifick* Part of her Life, notwithſtanding our zealous Party-Diſputes about it, that *thoſe Perſons*, who had the Conduct of her Counſels or approved of their Meaſures, ſeem to have no Reaſon, *at preſent*, to be aſhamed either of their *Politicks* or their *Judgment*.

But what will farther inforce this Argument, is the noble Magnanimity and princely Wiſdom, with which the preſent Empreſs of RUSSIA has begun her Reign. She advanced herſelf to that high Station, which ſhe adorns, by the ſole Merit of her extraordinary Virtues; and we are told, with as much Certainty as ſuch Matters can be communicated to us, that the late CZAR, her Husband, had ſo great a Veneration for her Judgment, that he conſulted her in all his moſt ſecret

ſecret and important Deſigns. Indeed the Dexterity and Addreſs, which ſhe has already diſcovered in the Management of publick Affairs, render it not at all incredible; and if ſhe ſhould maintain the Government of that unwieldly Empire with the ſame Tranquillity and Succeſs, which ſhe has hitherto done, I ſhall not doubt the Truth of what we have been told; and I hope our Enemies in FRANCE (I mean the *Enemies of our Sex)* will allow that there is no Occaſion for a *Salique Law.*

I ſhould be ungrateful to my own Country, if I did not, in this Place, take Notice of a PRINCESS, adorned with the unſpotted Virtue of the *two firſt*, and with the great Abilities and Wiſdom of them all; a *Princeſs*, who hath diſtinguiſhed herſelf in a remarkable Manner for the *Proteſtant Religion*, not only as ſhe is perfectly acquainted with the moſt intricate Points of Divinity (which appears by the Papers between the late famous Mr. *Leibnitz* and the learned Dr. *Clarke)* but as ſhe alſo refuſed one of the greateſt Titles of this World, rather than comply with *Popiſh Superſtition.* I will only add, that Providence has rewarded her in a manner, worthy of ſuch a pious Reſolution, by her near Alliance to one of the greateſt Monarchies in *Europe*; and by having it entailed, in the fulleſt Manner, upon her illuſtrious Poſterity for ever.

I hope you will not be ſo partial to your *own Sex* as to refuſe to do Juſtice to the whole Body of *Womankind*, by inſerting this Letter, from

SIR,

Your conſtant Reader,

A. N. BRITANNICA.